

# **Kurdish Movements and Distributive Power Structures: A Theoretical Model to Understand the Rise and Fall of Kurdish Movements**

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## **Abstract**

Many studies have been conducted on the Kurds and their movements. Most authors have considered historical dimensions or applied limited theoretical variables, but have not been able to identify the variables to identify the key reasons behind the rise and fall of Kurdish movements in an explanatory theoretical model. Consequently, there is neither available data about their rise, continuity, and fall, nor an explicit model to explain how they rose and fell. This paper seeks to create such a theoretical model by relying on the concepts of international relations. This paper responds to the key questions of why Kurdish movements rise, fall, and continue, and what factor or factors influence their distinguishing features? It is hypothesized that the ways that Kurdish movements rise, fall, and continue are influenced by the distributive and reproductive power structures at the four analysis levels of the international system, regional, national, and intra-Kurdish levels. The unique features of each level are expressed in one of the four possible states of hegemony, power-centered, balance-centered, and transition as applies to each of the four levels separately. This study applies distributive models for the period 1815–1990. Future studies could consider reproductive model analysis.

**Keywords:** Kurdish movements, distributive power structures, quadruple analysis levels

## 1. Introduction

Many studies have been conducted on the Kurds and their movements, so much so that we can declare that a rich body of quantitative literature has been developed in this domain. Many of the studies which have considered certain variables have gained a strong and respected position among readers in terms of their production of quality text, while other works have simply comprised a text rooted in the complex emotions of their authors influenced by an accident, tragedy, or their own excitement. But what has been written on Kurdish movements in the four countries of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, comprising the key focus of this paper has either been historical and event-oriented, or at most considered an explanatory variable to explain a Kurdish movement or movements by relying on a particular and narrow perspective and deliberately or inadvertently overlooking other variables.

There are no clear answers to many questions about Kurdish movements despite the rich quantitative literature on the Kurds. It seems idealistic to seek to examine the ambiguities of the Kurdish movement in their totality, but an initial effort in this direction would be to determine a theoretical model that can serve to help understand the history of the Kurds and their movements. When do Kurdish movements rise? When do they fall? Why are some of them long-term and others short-term? Why are some of them institutionalized and non-violent, and others non-institutionalized and violent? Why do these movements arise at one time in Turkey or Syria and at another time in Iran or Iraq? Or why have movements been formed simultaneously in all four regions? Why are some movements strong and vast and others weak and limited? And why are the movements more sustained in recent times compared to the past, particularly before the 1990s? There are

clearly infinite questions that attract our attention to Kurdish history, and lead us to seek to identify a model that governs Kurdish movements beyond the event-oriented, the storytelling, and the analytical Scattering

Ultimately, our aim is to answer the key question of what factor or factors affect the rise, fall, and continuation of Kurdish movements and what are their distinguishing features? Our hypothesis is that the rise, fall, and continuation of Kurdish movements are affected by the distributive and reproductive power structures at the four levels of analysis of the international system, regional, national and intra-Kurdish levels, and that the particular features of each level are expressed simultaneously in the form of the four different states of hegemonism, power-centered, balance-centered, and transition. This hypothesis leads us to develop a theoretical model that will be discussed in detail in the next section. Due to space constraints, only the effects of the distributive production of power on Kurdish movements will be examined in this paper, and only a specific time period. Although this period has no limitation in terms of its beginning, it has a fixed end point. We need to identify an important historical beginning in our analysis of Kurdish movements due to their long history and the constraints of this paper preventing the examination of all movements. Consequently, this paper has its own historical specificity, although it is claimed that its model can be generalized to all Kurdish movements. It demonstrates that the distributive power model is the most comprehensive framework for explaining Kurdish movements from the 1815 Congress of Vienna until the beginning of the New World Order in the early 1990s. In contrast, the reproductive power model is considered as a more appropriate theoretical basis to explain and analyze Kurdish movements from the early 1990s until now.

The author believes that international relations provides useful concepts for the analysis of the way that Kurdish movements rise and fall, their functional mechanisms, and their features. But this does not mean that international relations has the capacity equivalent to other disciplines to explain the reasons for the rise of Kurdish movements. This paper does not aim to answer the question of why the Kurds rebel, but rather explain how Kurdish movements rebel, what conditions are needed to transform their historical protest into movements, and why these movements have the features they do. The author assumes at this stage that for this purpose, the concepts of international relations are useful, and their application to all four levels of analysis is more useful than the application of the concepts of other disciplines, that may not be so effective. Further studies should be conducted in the fields of philosophy and sociology to understand the reasons why the Kurds have continued to protest throughout their history, by focusing on intra-Kurdish variables. The present paper, following this introduction, turns to a short introduction of the related subject literature, followed by four main sections, comprising a justification of the use of a distributive power model, an application of a distribution power model to the case of Kurdish movements, and a discussion of Kurdish movements in practice, and a conclusion.

## **2. An Introduction to the Subject Literature**

We can classify the Kurdish literature briefly here into three groups based on the type of question, utilizing the theory, analysis levels, and concepts of international relations. The first group includes papers that examine the Kurdish movements solely based on historical and circumstantial perspectives. In this category, we can

point to the works of authors such as Kutchera, Edmonds, McDowall, Ridge, Ramtin, Lazarev, Olson, Noshirvan Mustafa, Burzoui, Ghanei Fard, Khoshhali, Randal, Ablas, Mobli, Mohammad Baghi, Sardashti, Amin Aveh, Yuksel, Loqman Meho, Mullah Ezat, Hesami, Ghazaz, Khaliqi and some of the contributions to the Tishk, Zaribar, Rozhev, Politia, Zhivar, Goftegoo, Iran Perspectives magazines, etc.

The second group includes the papers that examine Kurdish movements by adapting various current theories that belong to the West, and tend to omit several analysis levels. These include Eagleton, Matin, Rubin, Olsen, Ghassemlou, Hamid Ahmadi, Ocalan, Bruinessen, Hyper, Ipple, Bayat, Jalaeipour, Kendal, Mohammad Kamal, Sediq Tawfiq, Mohammadpour and Soleimani, Kaveh Amin, Jamil Kolahie, Ayub Karimi, Masoud Rostami, Saro Ardalan, Ardeshir Peshang, Hajimine, Entessar, Mokhtar Hooshmand, Ehsan Hooshmand, Jalil Karimi, Khalid Khayati, Saeed Madani and some of the works of the magazines mentioned above, etc. The theories of international relations have been utilized in some of these works.

The third group comprises the papers that have applied creative and new theories in the field of Kurdish literature while influenced by various Western theories, but still face the problem of not including certain analysis levels in their studies. Such authors include Abbas Vali, Hamid Bozarlsan, Raman Hajizadeh, Hirsh Ghaderi, Ismail Besikci, Mohammad Haghmoradi, Khaled Khayati, as well as Mohammadpour, Soleimani, Matin and Koochi Kamali, etc. While the works written in these three areas are much more plentiful than the above examples, the lack of reference to omitted authors is not because of their insignificance, but the confines of space here.

This paper differs from the existing Kurdish literature in three respects. The first difference is that it addresses a novel question, *how* Kurdish movements rise or fall, and what conditions are necessary for their rise and fall. This question has led us to create a theoretical model. The second difference is related to the simultaneous consideration of four analysis levels to explain the rise and fall of these movements, and the third difference concerns the use of distributive power structures in four different states. These matters have not been studied separately or simultaneously by the authors of important papers published in the field of Kurdish studies.

### **3. Distributive Power Structures as a Foundation for a Theoretical Model**

Three basic concepts, system, structure, process, and the connection among them are the key concepts in predominant international relations theories (Holsti, 1988, pp. 44–46). Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1989, p. 58) define each international system as “a set of actors in a power (structure) arrangement and involved in regular interaction models (process) and are separated from other units by boundaries created by a particular subject, and limited in their behavior within the system (internal context) and the external system (environment).”

According to the above definition, structure points to the kinds of actors in a system, and in relation to each other, the principal variables include the number of actors and the kind of power distribution among them (Waltz, 1979, pp. 157–160). The concept of process also explains mutual interaction models between actors in a system with the fundamental variables of interaction type and

intensity. The type of interaction points to cooperation and conflict, and the intensity of interaction describes the degree of interaction over a period of time. Each structure has an appropriate interaction process and creates and maintains regular interaction (Bercher & Wilkenfeld, 1989, p. 58). Alongside the concept of system, we also observe the subsystem. The latter concept solves the contradiction in the concept of environment for an international system because there is nothing outside the world system that can be called the environment; a global system is only defined by its context (internal conditions).

Subsystems have the same structure and process as systems (Lake & Morgan, 1997, p. 96), but with the difference that they are deeply influenced by their environment and there is a hierarchical relationship among them in terms of the influence of the international system towards the subsystems, and from the subsystems towards the smaller internal subsystems (Lake & Morgan, 1997, pp. 97–100). Simultaneously, each subsystem can represent and determine the interaction patterns of its upstream system, although it is influenced by the environment created by the greater system.

Accordingly, we observe four analysis levels or one system and three sub-systems relevant to Kurdish movements. The international system level is the first, largest and most influential analysis level. The regional level is the second most influential analysis level, and as explained by Lake and Morgan (1997, p. 29), “the region points to a set of countries that are linked by common geography and one or more property.” Our studied region is a collection of countries that are identified by the Kurdish factor alongside the geographical factor, which has significant strategic importance for the international system because of its location in

one of the most geostrategically and geoeconomically important places in the world, meaning that its developments affect the international system structure greatly and its processes and are also greatly affected by them. The national level is our third analysis level. The national level relates to the states and empires that have faced or are facing the Kurdish people and includes countries such as Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, as well as the Ottoman and Iranian empires of the past. Intra-Kurdish analysis forms the fourth analysis level, pointing to the structures and processes influencing the Kurdish community. Each of these levels can be defined as a system., although all are located within each other and are Subsystems of their upstream systems. These systems and subsystems interact with each other.. Notwithstanding, larger systems or subsystems affect downstream subsystems more than the inverse.

These four analysis levels enable a Kurdish movement to be explained and analyzed when the structure and process of all four analysis levels are considered simultaneously. However, the determination of these four analysis levels is not enough; we should also identify their structure and processes to achieve a more complete model, considering the differences between national and international structures (Waltz, 1979, p. 171). Four basic structure types can be considered in terms of the structure, the number of important actors within each system and the type of power distribution among them.

The first type of structure is the hegemonic structure. The hegemonic structure at each analysis level means that there is a superior and legitimate power that takes the most possible power, and governs the current system (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 46) while others accept this actor's power by consent (Griffiths, 2009, p. 434–



436). In such a structure, processes, i.e., interaction patterns are cooperative, and the system is stable and in equilibrium. A stable state means the occurrence of change remains in a specific range that keeps the system in a state of equilibrium in terms of the number of actors and the type of power distribution (Brecher & Wilkenfeld, 1989, pp. 60–62).

The second type of structure is the power-centered structure. The power-centered structure at the above four analysis levels is a structure in which a superpower player has the greatest possible power and forces others to adhere to its own rules and behaviors using strong and coercive power as the most significant material factor of political power (Morgenthau, 1967, pp. 48–49). In this type of structure, processes are based on the cooperation and interaction model that is created by force and the system is constant and balanced. This means that the change level is not high enough to cause instability or irreversible trends in the structure.

The third type of structure is the balance-centered structure. Balance can be take place in various forms, such as bipolar (Waltz), multipoles (Singer), multicenter, asymmetric bipolar (Hanrider), bipolar multipoles (Roskerans), multiple hierarchies' balances (Hoffmann), bidirectional structure (Spiegel), anomalous bipolar (Kaplan), multi-block (Master) among others (Brecher & Wilkenfeld, 1989, pp. 88–90). All states represent a type of balance affected by polarization as the most significant balancing feature that can be formed within the distributive power framework between two or more actors at each of the four analysis levels (Little, 2007, p. 411). In a balancing structure, the most power is not held by a single monopolizing actor, and rather, two or more actors share the most power in a way that none can dominate the other or all others due to the balancing conditions and constant

change of alliances and coalitions due to the various references and centers of power (Little, 2007, pp. 10–15). In the balancing structural situation, processes can be formed according to both cooperative and conflict models, but in the case of conflict models, conflict is not raised to a level that causes the system to become unbalanced or cause irreversible change, but rather a certain and defined level of instability that can be analyzed within the system and does not cause it to change (Morgenthau, 1967, pp. 288–294).

The final structure comprises a transient situation. The distribution of power and the number of actors is suspended in the transient situation, while conditions of war and direct contact are formed and process models take a form of severe conflict. The intensity of the conflict is to an extent due to the degree to which the system is ultimately not only unstable but also imbalanced and susceptible to irreversible change in terms of which state dominates its structures, leading eventually to the formation of a new structure with new actors and types of power distribution.

**Table 1: Combining Different Levels with Quadruple Structural States**

Analysis level	Type of structure				Sum
	Hegemonic	Power-centered	Balancing	Transient	
<b>International system</b>	64	64	64	64	256
<b>Regional system</b>	64	64	64	64	256
<b>National system</b>	64	64	64	64	256
<b>Intra-Kurdish system</b>	64	64	64	64	256
<b>Sum</b>	256	256	256	256	

Each analysis level with each of the four modes in a constant form can produce 64 different states when combined with the variable states of the other analysis levels (see Table 1). In total, 256 quadruple modes that can impact the rise and fall of a Kurdish movement can be extracted from these various states. Presently, the main question is, how would Kurdish movements rise, fall, and continue in each of the 256 imaginary states? In which of the above states will a larger, longer, and more noticeable movement rise, and in which states, will a Kurdish movement be unable to rise and actualize its protest state? In which state, will a weak or moderate movement be formed? Which state can explain the Kurdish movement in Turkey, for example, and analyze the lack of emergence of similar movements in Iran or Iraq simultaneously? Which ones represent impossible situations for Kurdish movements, which ones represent potential and non-actualized situations, and finally, which states are considered as historical states in which Kurdish movements actualized from 1815 to 1990?

To answer these questions, we should add a few points and principles to our model to clarify it. The influence of higher analysis levels on lower analysis levels is greater than the reverse, but we cannot neglect the influence of the agent, i.e. the Kurdish community, on the structure. Therefore, we should be more careful in valuing the Kurdish community and consider its effects on more influential power structures. As the Kurdish community is considered the main variable here, we should not ignore the praxis of this agent because agents and their interactions are significantly important in terms of the causal power of the structure. Otherwise, the structure will be objectified. (Wendt, 1999, p. 214).

Accordingly, we will consider the influential value of the Kurdish community level higher than the national level and equal

to the regional level but lower than the international level. In this framework, to simplify our model, we will specify each level of analysis and its modes in the form of quantitative indicators to quantify their impact on the formation of a Kurdish movement.. Consequently, we score the international system in the hegemonic situation +2 and -2, in the power-centered state +1.5 and -1.5, in the balancing state +1 and in the transition state +2. We score regional analysis level in the hegemonic structural state +1 and -1, in the power-centered state +0.75 and -0.75, in the balancing state +0.5 and in the transient state +1. We score the national analysis level in the hegemonic state -0.5, in the power-centered state -0.37, in the balancing state +0.25, and in the transition state +0.5. We also score the intra-Kurdish level in the hegemonic state +1, in the power-based state +0.75, in the balancing state +0.5 and in the transition state -1 (see Table 2).

**Table 2: The Quantitative Value of Different Analysis Levels and Structures to Form a Kurdish Movement**

Structure level	Hegemonic	Power-centered	Balancing	Transient
<b>International</b>	+2.0, -2.0	+1.5, -1.5	+1.0	+2.0
<b>Regional</b>	+1.0, -1.0	+0.75, -0.75	+0.5	+1.0
<b>National</b>	-0.5	-0.37	+0.25	+0.5
<b>Intra-Kurdish</b>	+1.0	+0.75	+0.5	-1.0

The following points can be mentioned about the Table 2:

1. The hegemonic and power-centered states at the two analysis levels of the international and the regional systems have positive and negative values. This is due to inconstancy in the positive or negative orientation of a hegemonic and power-oriented actor at

the international and regional levels related to a Kurdish movement. Depending on the interests of these actors, they may sometimes be full supporters and sometimes full opponents of the Kurdish movement. Therefore, both states are possible, depending on the historical conditions.

2. Regarding the hegemonic and power-oriented states at the two international and regional analysis levels, when the hegemon or superior power at one or both analysis levels supports a Kurdish movement, it is given the highest value, i.e. +2 and +1 respectively in the hegemonic state and +1.5 and +0.75 in the power-oriented state. When the hegemon or regional power opposes a Kurdish movement, the lowest values are allocated to these states, meaning -2 and -1 in the hegemonic state and -1.5 and -0.75 in the power-centered state.
3. There are two points mentioned above about the power-oriented state at both the international and regional levels. Because in the power-oriented state, there is a superior actor who may have a positive or negative attitude towards the formation of a Kurdish movement. The two national and intra-Kurdish levels in the hegemonic and power-oriented situations have different values, but they are always constant. At the national level, the presence of hegemonic and power-oriented states is always a disadvantage for a Kurdish movement and take the values of -0.5 and -0.37 respectively. On the contrary, the hegemonic and power-centered states always in favor of a Kurdish movement are given the values +1 and +0.75 respectively.

4The balanced state at all levels has a positive numerical value in favor of a Kurdish movement.

4. The transient state, at three international, regional, and national

levels, always acts in favor of a Kurdish movement and its value is positive and equal to the positive value of the hegemonic state at the same level.

5. The only exception to the sixth point is the intra-Kurdish level in which the transient state is a disadvantage for a Kurdish movement and its numerical value is equal to the negative state of the hegemonic state of the same analysis level.
6. The above values at each level and in four cases follow a regular model. Regardless of the positive or negative numerical values that must be determined according to the previous seven points in each level in terms of the amount and in each level, the transient and hegemonic state numbers are always the same, and the power-centered state number is half the number of the hegemonic state, and the balanced state number is the average of the two hegemonic and power-centered states.

Balancing states have been assumed to be positive in all four analysis levels because a Kurdish movement can use various alliances, coalitions, and actors against one another and create a functional and breathing space for itself in the balancing state at each analysis level, while the balancing parties try to reconsider their enemies as friends. Hegemonic and power-centered states at the national analysis level are always considered negative—and marked with a negative value—for a Kurdish movement because the central governments in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria always oppose the rise of Kurdish movements in any state and suppress them using power. The transient situation at all three analysis levels also provide the most favorable conditions for a Kurdish movement to rise and has the highest score of any analysis level in this state. But if the Kurdish level is in a transient state, the lowest score of that analysis level will be allocated to the Kurdish movement.

#### 4. Kurdish Movements and Distributive Power Structures

Based on the model set out above, 4.5 is the maximum score for conditions leading to the formation of a Kurdish movement, and if these conditions occur, the strongest Kurdish movement will be formed. Conditions with a total score of 1 will allow the weakest Kurdish movement, which means that under these conditions it is possible to form a Kurdish movement, but it will be very weak and functionally incapable. We will explain the Kurdish movements more accurately by adding more variables to our theoretical model, and use the results from the expanded theoretical model to address the research questions with greater accuracy. But we first must determine our perception of strong and weak movements and identify their features.

We have considered 12 indices as indicative of strong Kurdish movements. These are demonstrated and defined in Table 3.

**Table 3: Features of a Strong and Comprehensive Movement**

Feature	Definition
High institutionalization	Benefits from political, economic, social, cultural, and military institutions which have specific rules and hierarchies
Low level of violence	Can act against its opposition without becoming caught up in violence and power
Temporal continuity	Ability to maintain its institutions, forces, and the territories it governs over a long period of time
High legitimacy	Has a method of social control that extends beyond the belief in force and personal interests and is based on public consent and will (Griffiths, 2009, p. 910)
Independent military force	Has a coherent, hierarchical, regular military structure, can use logistics and access weapons

→

← Continuation of Table 3

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Strong regional relations	Capacity to establish strong relationships at the regional level with other Kurdish movements, regional governments or organizations
Strong trans-regional relations	Beyond the region considered, establishes strong relationships with other countries, regional and trans-regional or international movements and organizations
Coherence and unification	In its territorial circle, can prevent the rise of other movements or incorporate different demands into its core demands, in order to avoid division and conflict within its own area of influence
Powerful leadership and charisma	It means powerful, acceptable, legitimate and extraordinary leadership that is the subject of community obedience and emotional actions.(Bashiriyeh, 2011: 62).
Coherent view of Kurdish nationalism	Integrate different readings of Kurdish nationalism into its own reading, adopt a coherent rationality and transform the competition in these areas into consensus. Such a reading should include an agreement on the governing entity
Geographical control	Able to enforce its institutions and rules in a specific territorial area and enjoy some form of internal sovereignty and authority.
Ability to take active and rational action	Reflect new ideas and movements in the region and represent developing societies at the heart of social order, rather than simply taking reactive action (Griffiths, 2012, p. 134).

Any movement that enjoys the most favorable circumstances for formation based on the features of the analysis level and the combined structure can have all 12 mentioned features. All these features have a single value and a deficiency in any one can reduce the power of the movement. In fact, a movement that scores 4.5 based on the model of analysis in this paper can have all 12



features. In combining these features with our theoretical model, we can present a ranged and quantified table (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Scoring of Movements Based on Features of Strong Movements**

Type of movement	Very weak		Weak		Partly weak		Partly strong		Strong		Very strong
Point	1		2		3		3.5		4		4.5
Number of features	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

The movements have been rated from 1 to 4.5. Movements have been divided into strong, partly strong, partly weak, weak, and very weak movements. A strongly established movement influenced by favorable structural conditions which scores 4.5 can actualize all 12 features of a very strong movement. As Table 4 shows, movements may have levels of strength between the six points identified. For example, there may be movements with no clear characterization between the two distinct points of “very strong” and “strong.” These movements have combined features.

We use the 12 features to determine the nature of movements and define them using the terms very strong, strong and partly strong etc. to clarify their nature for the reader. But at the same time we have tried to show the relationship between these twelve features and the distributed structural relationships to make the subject easier to understand.. In the above table, the scores decline at a rate of half a point per feature between very strong and partly weak movements, but scores decline at a rate of one point per feature between partly weak and very weak movements. This difference is designed to distinguish between movements that have

more than half of the 12 features and movements that have fewer than half.

Movements that have a very weak score according to distributive structural conditions still include at least two features of a strong movement. It is irrational and impractical to define a movement based on only a single feature, and other complementary features must also be present in order to ascertain the point at which a protest becomes a movement. Any movement or protest with a score of less than 1 according to the distributive structural conditions, i.e. which does not have at least two features of a strong movement, cannot be classed as a movement.

Consequently, we can propose more precise descriptions of Kurdish movements and the hypotheses that can be extracted from our model in order to answer the research questions. First, we should determine which of the 256 considered states have historically precluded the possibility of Kurdish movement formation, under which states a movement can emerge, and under which states a movement actually emerged. Hence, 48 states of the 256 possible states are considered to preclude the possibility of the rise of a Kurdish movement, so therefore there is neither any value or relevance in debating whether a movement will form or not, nor predicting possible movement features. For example, if the international level is categorized as transient, the regional level as balancing, the national level as transient, and the Kurdish level as transient, there is no possibility that a Kurdish movement will form.

The contradiction between this state and the possibility of the formation of a Kurdish movement is due to the effective relationship between the international system and regional levels. When the international system is transient, due to the geostrategic and geoeconomic importance of the Middle East and our region of

focus, i.e., the Kurdish region for the international system, this region cannot balance it. If the international system is transient, this region will move towards a transition state as well, due to the overwhelming upstream influence.

Historical cases show us that whenever the international level has been in a transition state, the structure of the region under consideration has moved towards a transition state. The Middle East was a main theatre of war during both World War I (in the context of Eastern Front) and World War II (as a vital and strategic path) (Baylis & Smith, 2005, pp. 133–166). In contrast, areas with little importance for the international system and its major powers in a given period may not be as affected by the international system being in a transition state. For example, neither the South or Central American nor Oceania region have been important in the history of World War I or World War II (Kennedy, 1987, pp. 363–387). However, the combination of a transient international level and a balancing regional level in the Middle East represents an impossible situation. Accordingly, it is impossible that a transient international level will be combined with a regional hegemonic or power-centered level in the region for the same reason mentioned above. Therefore, the first assumption is that in the situation that the international level is transient, the regional level (of the Middle East) will also tend towards a transient state and will be strongly affected by its upstream analysis level.

Of the 256 states, 208 states can be considered as conditions in which it is possible to comment about the rise or non-rise of a Kurdish movement and its features. Among the 208 states, Kurdish movements have historically emerged in only 8 states thus far. Kurdish movements have not historically emerged in the 200 remaining states. Table 5 specifies the 256 states in 4 situations,

and under each situation the number of movements that can rise, and their power level, are specified.

**Table 5. Historical and Potential States for the Rise of Kurdish Movements**

Optimism or pessimism towards regional and international levels	Type of movement formed											
	Very strong		Strong		Moderately strong		Partly weak		Weak		Very weak	No movement
	Score											
	4.5	4.0 to 4.5	4.0	3.5 to 4.0	3.5	3.0 to 3.5	3.0	2.0 to 3.0	3	1.0 to 2.0	1	-1.0 to -4.5
Number of situations												
Pessimistic about both levels	1	2	3	6	4	5	5	25	7	31	6	160
Optimistic about the international system level	2	4	7	12	10	14	10	50	16	61	11	59
Optimistic about the regional level	2	5	7	10	7	14	11	34	7	24	9	126
Optimistic about both levels	4	10	16	23	19	34	19	65	13	35	6	13

Table 5 has been generated by calculating all 256 states and the algebraic sum of all four states in addition to the four optimism-pessimism variables introduced. A pessimistic outlook towards both analysis levels means that we have considered the two analysis levels of the international and regional systems in hegemonic and power-centered structural states as being contrary and opposed to the formation of any Kurdish movement. In other words, we have anticipated the possibilities for the emergence of a Kurdish movement under the conditions of the international as well as regional system levels being hegemonic and power-centered. We have thus assigned the possibility of the formation of a Kurdish movement in this situation the most negative score. The US's declaration of its willingness to provide assistance to Iran in the case of Azerbaijan and Mahabad, and the US threatening note to the Soviet Union to withdraw from Iran on November 24, 1945 are examples of this situation (Azgandi, 2002, p. 145). In order to represent the state when the international system is hegemonic, the regional system is power-centered, the national system is power-centered, and the intra-Kurdish system level is hegemonic, we identified an algebraic formula resulting in a score of -2.12, which means the non-formation of a Kurdish movement:

$$-2 + 1 - 0.37 - 0.75 = -2.12$$

We have considered the situation of both levels of the international and regional systems in hegemonic and power-centered states respectively, when both are defensive and supportive of Kurdish movements, as the most optimistic situation. A historical example is the US and British defense of the right to determine the fate of the Ottoman Kurds (before the Lausanne Treaty), as Kurdistan had strategic importance to the British (McDowall, 2001, pp. 239–240). The algebraic sum of the this

situation (3.38) demonstrates a state in which a movement that has a fusion of weak and partly-weak characteristics can form:

$$+1 +2 +0.75 -0.37 = 3.38$$

The meaning of an optimistic situation at the international system level and a pessimistic situation at the regional level is that the hegemonic or power-centered structure of the international system supports and defends Kurdish movements, but the hegemonic or power-centered structure of the regional system is opposed. For example, US support for Syrian Kurds in contrast to Turkey's disagreement and conflict with them after the expansion of the Syrian crisis is a clear example of this case (Bahrami,2019). In this case, the algebraic sum of the above example would result in a score of 1.88 and allow a movement to be formed that fuses weak and very weak movement features:

$$+2 -0.75 -0.37 + 1 = 1.88$$

The final situation is that in which there is an optimistic outlook at the regional level but a pessimistic outlook in relation to the international system level. In this case, the hegemonic or power-centered structure of the regional system is a supporter and defender of the Kurdish movement, but the structure of the international system is contrary to it. In this case, the algebraic sum results in a score of -0.62, that is, a state in which a Kurdish movement cannot form:

$$-2 +1 -0.75 +0.37 = -0.62$$

All four divisions are important because depending on the conditions, the hegemonic or power-centered actor orientation of the regional and international systems may have different towards the formation of a Kurdish movement , and we must therefore consider each of these different states in our study. Disregarding

the two balancing and transient states in the international and regional analysis levels in Table 5 is due to the fact that they always have positive effects on the formation of a Kurdish movement.. Also, hegemonic and power-oriented structural states at both the level of national and intra-Kurdish analysis always had a negative and positive effect on the formation of a Kurdish movement, respectively., and in Balancing and transitional states at the level of national analysis, like these states at the level of analysis of the international and regional system, always have a positive effect on the formation of a Kurdish movement.. Unlike the previous cases, the transition mode at the level of intra-Kurdish analysis always has a negative effect on the formation of a Kurdish movement, but the balancing mode at this level of analysis also plays a positive role.

If we are optimistic about both the international and regional systems, only four out of the 256 states have the potential to contribute to the formation of a very strong movement. These states comprise the combinations of:

1. transitional international system, transitional regional system, transitional national system, and hegemonic intra-Kurdish system
2. transitional international system, hegemonic regional system, transitional national system and hegemonic intra-Kurdish system
3. hegemonic international system, hegemonic regional system, transitional national system, and hegemonic intra-Kurdish system
4. hegemonic international system, transitional regional system, transitional national system, and hegemonic intra-Kurdish system.

An example of this situation is the support of the US, Israel and Iran for Iraqi Kurds in the 1960s and early 1970s (Randal, 1997, pp. 242–257). At this time, both international and regional powers supported the Kurds. This period is more similar to the number 3 case in the above cases.

If we are pessimistic about both the international and regional systems, only one of the 256 possible states, that is, the first state described above, can provide the required conditions for the rise of a very strong Kurdish movement. The referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan demonstrates this situation (Kurdistan Referendum, 2017). When we are only optimistic about the international system level, among the 256 possible states, only states 1 and 4 above can provide the required conditions for a very strong movement. In the case of optimism about the regional level, among the 256 states, only states 1 and 2 above can provide the required conditions to form a very strong Kurdish movement. Hence, state 1 in all four positions may facilitate the rise of a very strong Kurdish movement.

We can conclude that transition states at three levels above the intra-Kurdish level, and a hegemonic state at the intra-Kurdish level, provide the best conditions for the formation of a very strong Kurdish movement in any circumstances. Transition states, for example the rise of world wars in which the order has been disrupted and suspended and a power-centered replacement order has not yet been formed, are considered the best conditions for the formation of a Kurdish movement. Historically, the stabilization of the current order in the frame of a new structure through a global or regional agreement has always suppressed Kurdish movements. The transition situation at the international level extends to other levels as well, and if the Kurds can avoid their negative



repercussions by creating hegemonic internal conditions, they will be able to generate a very strong movement. However, this task is very difficult because of the influence of structural conditions, and this is why a favorable situation did not historically develop for the Kurds during World War I or World War II. Had they been able to maintain a balancing state under these conditions, as will be explained, strong Kurdish movements may have formed in some places.

Although the effects of the international system are very strong in these situations, the agents include regional, national and intra-Kurdish levels in resisting these effects, and dissenting from the international structure's state, play a very significant role. The layered nature of the relationship between these agents means that while all are affected by the structural conditions, the downstream agents are relatively less affected because the impact of the international system's structural pressure is buffered by the upstream agents. Consequently, the formation of the balancing state and the non-formation of the transient state at the intra-Kurdish level, in situations when the international system is transient, may be a result of this factor. In these situations, the impact of these downstream agents on the formation of the structure of upstream agents is better defined and the structure-agent relationship is more discernable. In fact, the structural pressures from top to bottom are redirected from bottom to top as a result of their own effects, their passing through multiple buffers, and their modification and reinforcement at higher analysis levels. Eventually, these pressures affect the most superior structure—the international system structure—with a strength appropriate to the position of its producer's origin.

These conditions can be well described in terms of the effects of

the environment on the system. The international system acts as the environment of other analysis levels, in particular the closest level of analysis to it, i.e. the regional level. Additionally, from top to bottom, the higher analysis levels form the environment of the lower analysis levels. Each system is mostly affected by its direct environment and transfers it downstream. This has the effect of progressively reducing the burden of environmental conditions until they reach a minimum impact on the smallest agent operating within a system. In turn, the lower-level agents transfer their demands to the next higher environment, and these demands are either reinforced or weakened according to extant environmental conditions and then transferred higher, ultimately reaching the highest environment, i.e., the international system level, and affecting its structure. In fact, top-down processes are always progressively weakened, while bottom-up processes may either be weakened or strengthened. This occurrence accurately describes the experience of the Kurds because the requirements of the transient state from the higher levels have often created a balancing situation, while Kurdish demands for independence have been weakened in their transition from lower to higher levels.

## **5. Kurdish Movements in Practice**

In this section, we apply the model set out above to analyzing Kurdish movements in practice. The most favorable conditions for the growth and formation of Kurdish movements, as we saw above, are transient states at the three higher analysis levels. When all three analysis levels are in a transition state, the most favorable situation is created for the formation of a Kurdish movement, provided that the Kurdish movement can create a hegemonic structural state for itself. But the effect of the higher analysis levels on the intra-Kurdish level is not uniform, and each level has a

different effect. Higher levels have more influence and lower levels have less influence. Objectively speaking, if the international system level is transient, it affects the formation of Kurdish movements more in comparison to when the regional level is transient, and in the former state, stronger movements will be formed. For example, Sheikh Mahmoud and Judge Mohammed's movements in World Wars I and II are examples of this situation (Phillips, 2015, pp. 57–63).

Likewise, a transition situation at the regional level will facilitate the formation of a stronger Kurdish movement compared to a transition situation at the national level. The Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s and the forming of Kurdish movements in Iran, Iraq, and even Turkey during this period illustrate this point (Randal, 1997, pp. 272–277). Although higher levels automatically affect lower levels, the effects do not always lead to the same results, as the functioning of each level of analysis may be different; in some situations, lower levels may be able to resist the structural requirements of the higher level environment using particular policies and practices to counteract or reduce their impacts. For example, Turkey's policies during World War II in the form of reforms and policies of the Democratic Party and its alliance with the *aghas* were a major barrier to the formation of Kurdish movements in this country (McDowall, 2001, pp.403-407). It cannot be expected that the structural situation of higher levels will be transferred exactly to lower levels.

Although transitional structural conditions at the international system level may automatically extend to regional and national levels and place them in a transition state, it is also possible that this situation may not be transferred or may be transferred in a weakened form due to the specific conditions of the Kurdish

analysis level. Several factors may cause such a case to arise. The first factor, as mentioned, is the role that higher levels of analysis play in reducing pressures. The Samko movement was formed in such a way: the regional level increased its operational power in order to be affected less by the international transition structure (Burzoui, 1999, pp. 189–200). The second possible factor is the policies and actions that Kurdish agents pursue to escape these pressures. The conditions of Barzani's second movement were influenced by Mustafa Barzani's charisma and his rapid displacement can be analyzed in this context (Nikitin, 1956, pp. 428–431). The third factor that can be involved arises when the intra-Kurdish level lacks strategic value for the international system structure and does not transfer its pressures towards the Kurds in a focused way. The situation of Iraqi Kurds was in such a position after the Algiers Agreement (Van Bruinessen, 1978, pp. 48–49).

The situation of the Kurdish movements in situations in which a hegemonic or power-centered actor at the international or regional level supports them can be perfect, but such actors have top-down impacts, and affect levels higher than them less than they affect Kurdish movements.

Using our theoretical model, we will describe the general position of each Kurdish movement from 1815 to 1990 (see Table 6). Historically, the strongest Kurdish movements were established when the structural situation of the international system analysis level was transient. In the cases of the movements of Samko, Sheikh Mahmoud Barzanji, and the first movement of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran in Mahabad—two movements during World War I and one movement during World War II—the conditions caused by the structure of the international system facilitated the extension of that system to the regional and national

analysis levels, and transformed both analysis levels into a transition structural state. However, the intra-Kurdish analysis level did not transfer into a transitional structural state, and remained in a balancing state. This was due to the role of higher levels of analysis in reducing structural pressures on the one hand and the strong competition for control among the intra-Kurdish actors, whether in the Ottoman Empire, the Qajar Empire or the Second Pahlavi era.

The balancing situation refers not to the balance between the various Kurdish forces in all Kurdish areas, but rather a balance between the Kurds of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria separately. During World War I, we observe strong movements in the Ottoman Empire and in the Qajar Empire (McDowall, 2001, pp. 278–280). However, during World War II, there was a strong movement only in Iran, and a movement which fused partly weak and weak features emerged in Iraq, but no particular movement in Turkey or Syria; the Khoybun movement in Syria merged with the Communist Party (Phillips, 2015, p. 112). This difference was caused by structural conditions at the national level, the structural conditions of the Kurds in these countries, and way in which international powers viewed the rulers and states of these countries. In both Turkey and Syria, a power-centered and centralized structure on the one hand, and the suppression and killing of 40,000 people in the last significant uprising of the 1930s—the Dersim rebellion—on the other, terminated the Kurdish movement (Kutschera, 1979, p. 163). Further, the converging policies of the ruling systems in these countries as creations of the international system and its principal powers, and their marginalization from the strategic battle fronts were also effectual factors in the lesser influence of the structural situation of the international system on Turkey and Syria compared to Iran and Iraq.

**Table 6: Determining the State of Kurdish Movements from 1815 to 1990**

Type of movement	Score	Situation by level				Movement
		Intra-Kurdish	National	Regional	Inter-national system	
Partly weak	3	Balancing	Transient	Transient	Balancing	The movement of Mir Mohammed Rawandiz 1823–1835
Partly weak	3	Balancing	Transient	Transient	Balancing	Badr Khan movement 1836–1847
Between partly weak and weak	2.75	Balancing	Balancing	Transient	Balancing	Yazadnashir movement
Between partly strong and partly weak	3.25	Power-centered	Transient	Transient	Balancing	Sheikh Obaidullah Nahri movement
Strong	4	Balancing	Transient	Transient	Transient	Samko movement
Strong	4	Balancing	Transient	Transient	Transient	Sheikh Mahmoud Barzanji movement
Partly weak	3	Balancing	Transient	Transient	Balancing	Sheikh Said of Palu movement
Between weak and very weak	1.5	Balancing	Power-centered	Balancing	Balancing	Ararat movement
Between weak and very weak	1.5	Balancing	Power-centered	Balancing	Balancing	Dersim movement
Between weak and very weak	1.5	Balancing	Power-centered	Balancing	Balancing	First movement of Barzani
Between partly strong and partly weak	3.25	Power-centered	Power-centered	Transient	Transient	Second movement of Barzani
Strong	4	Balancing	Transient	Transient	Transient	First movement of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran
Partly weak	3	Hegemonic	Transient	Balancing	Balancing	Third movement of Barzani
Weak	2	Balancing	Power-centered	Transient	Balancing	Yeketi movement
Partly weak	3	Balancing	Transient	Transient	Balancing	Komala Movement
Partly weak	3	Balancing	Transient	Transient	Balancing	Second movement of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran
Weak	2	Balancing	Power-centered	Transient	Balancing	Ghiade Movaghat movement

Although there was an active Kurdish power-centered movement in the Kurdish areas of Iraq, But British support for a centralized power in Baghdad was a major obstacle to the Kurdish movement, and the Kurdish movement's leaders were eventually forced to emigrate to Iran after a fierce military confrontation with the British-backed government. (Kinnane, 1964, pp. 105–106). Further, in relation to Iran, the change in the structure of the international system from a transition to balancing state, the change in the regional structure from a transition to power-centered state, and the change in the national structure from a transition to power-centered state, combined to reduce the potential for the formation of a Kurdish movement and/or eliminate it. International and regional agreements are formed through such changes, order is eventually determined, and the position of Kurdish movements is specified within that order. In fact, the processes of the formation and strengthening of international order, and particularly regional order, has always been observed hand-in-hand with the suppression and elimination of Kurdish movements. The Conventions of Khandegar-Scalasi, Al-Razne al-Roum II, Paris 1856, Lausanne, Saadabad, the Algiers Agreement and so on, reveal regional objectives and constitute obvious examples of the repression of Kurdish movements through the stability of the current order.

The level of violence of the movements also depends on Kurdish movements' internal structural status and the structural status of other analysis levels, particularly the national level. It is obvious that if the intra-Kurdish situation is transient, violence will increase, but in other states, the situation is a bit more complicated. The relationship between the two internal and national analysis levels in a power-centered structural situation is fundamentally violent and has a high violence level. This issue is apparent in Barzani's second movement in Iraq (Kutschera, 1979, pp. 181–

184). The relationship between two analysis levels, one hegemonic and the other power-centered, can also be violent, although the violence level is very low. The relationship between a power-centered and a balancing state is more violent than the former. The Yeketi movement, which began on June 1, 1975, is a clear example of such a case: this movement conflicted with Barzani on the one hand and with the central Iraqi government on the other (McDowall, 2001, pp. 303-305). When two structural situations are both hegemonic, violence is often undeveloped or minimal. A hegemonic state can lead to the most severe violence if it is drawn from a radical ideology. The situation of violence in the frame of the correlated constructs can be applied to the structural situation of the regional and international analysis levels when these levels in hegemonic and power-centered structural situations are opposed to Kurdish movements.

Therefore, all historical Kurdish movements have been formed when the structural status of the international and regional analysis levels have been in a transient or balancing state. Stronger movements have been formed in the transition state and weaker movements have been formed in the balancing state. In most cases, it is perceived that the international structure has determined the regional structure. In cases where the international system has been in a transient state, this structural state was automatically imposed on the regional and national analysis levels, although the intra-Kurdish level has been less influenced by these conditions for the reasons previously stated. While the international system has been in a balancing state, the regional level has been in a transition state in most cases, and in a balancing state in a few cases. According to historical studies, the transient state has been imposed on the regional level in order to maintain balance at the international level. An explicit example of this issue is the Iran-Iraq war, which was a



war to maintain balance in the region (Kamrava, 2005, pp. 219–220).

In situations where regional structural conditions have been in a transient state, the national structural conditions have been placed in a transient state in all except four cases. In these four cases, these countries have been able to show greater independence from the regional structure by implementing their own policies and practices. The independence of the region had been less than that of the international system due to its weakness, and the independence of the national level has been higher than that of the regional level. The role of countries as agents has been greater than that of this region of the world as an agent, and the role of the Kurds as agents has been greater than the former analysis levels. But this agency has mostly operated within a limited structure, in the balancing form, although in some limited cases, hegemonic and power-centered structures are also found among them. Diversity of structures among Kurds indicates their power as an agent and the role of an agent in relation to structure and evasion of the structural conditions of higher levels. Such diversity among national actors also shows their role in moderating higher level structures in specific historical circumstances.

When the regional level has been balanced, the independence of countries had been higher than that of Kurdish movements, and they have acted in most cases in the form of a power-centered structure. But there have also been situations in which the structure of the international system has been in balance. The formation of a balanced structure at the regional level indicates the conditions that prepare the necessary ground to place the national structure in a power-centered situation and thus create a fundamental barrier to Kurdish movements other than the cases mentioned in Table 6. It

can be concluded that if the structure of the international system and its essential balance needed to form the balancing state in the considered region, either Kurdish movements will not be formed at all or will be very weak as a result of the power-centered structures in the four countries.

However, if the structure of the international system and its expected balancing needs to form a transition structure in the considered region, although Kurdish movements may be formed, But the strength of this movement in the most optimistic case, a movement will be partly strong. In another situation, if the international system is in a transition structural situation, this structure will be transferred to other levels automatically and the Kurds will be able to create strong or very strong movements. The results show that the analysis levels of regional that Kurdish lands are located in it is weak and passive and has no independent effects on its downstream levels: this does not mean that it is not effective, but that this region is important in terms of transmitting the structural effects of higher levels to downstream levels. It is more important than other levels of analysis according to its transmitter status and its effects on the structure level in terms of the structure of the international system. At the same time, the importance of the national and intra-Kurdish analysis levels exceeding the influence of upstream structures is heavily affected by their internal functions to generate a suitable position for themselves as agents.

## **6. Final Conclusion**

This paper aimed to provide a theoretical model, not to explain the reason behind the formation of Kurdish movements, but as a way to understand their rise and fall in different historical periods. The lack of such an analysis is perceived in the generalities of the

existing scholarship regarding Kurdish movements. Most of these studies are limited to a form of historiography, but their accounts are also lacking theoretical bases in the field of international relations. Accordingly, this paper proposes a theory to fill these two gaps and achieve a better understanding of the rise and fall of Kurdish movements and the mechanisms influencing them. The generation of a model in this paper shows the importance of distributive power structures and classification, segmentation, indexing, quantification, and the relationships among them.

In sum, we can say that although the analysis levels of international, regional, national, and internal systems are significant, the key factors for the creation of Kurdish movements and their fall in this study have been determined in the order of the international system first, followed by the intra-Kurdish, national, and regional structures. The results show that the Middle East region, where the Kurds are located, is a very weak, passive, and non-autonomous region that is greatly influenced by the international system. On the other hand, the Kurds as agents are very significant, and the intra-Kurdish level has played a more important role in the creation and collapse of movements than the national or even the regional levels. But we can not ignore any level of analysis in relation to any movement, and their combination and coherence is very important in explaining a movement. History shows that strong Kurdish movements have appeared or can appear in transient international structures and weaker movements in transient international structures, and that both structures have promoted the rise of Kurdish movements.

Whenever the international structure had been in a transient state, the regional structure has mostly taken a transient form as well, but, Whenever the level of analysis of the international system has been in balance, due to its balancing requirements, in

most cases, it has directed the level of regional analysis to a state of transition, and in a few cases, it has put it in a state of balance. . Whenever the regional structure has been affected by the international structure in a transient state, the national structure has taken on a transient form with the exception of four cases. But whenever the regional structure has been in balance with the international structure, the national structure has moved towards a power-centered state. A power-centered national structure can show its independence in relation to the upstream levels and may be influenced by the balance requirements of the higher levels that should be reviewed in each case separately. In most cases, where higher levels have been in a transient or balancing state, the intra-Kurdish structure has been in a balancing state. Where higher levels had been in a balancing state, this balancing situation has often been the result of higher level influence, but in other cases, the persistence of the balancing state has indicated the importance and independence of the intra-Kurdish level in the rise and fall of Kurdish movements.

Stable international order and agreements have been effective in terms of weakening and disrupting Kurdish movements, even more so than any stabilization at the regional level; in fact, we should state that in the studied region, it is the structure of the international system that defines the structure of the region and the formation of agreements. Of course, this statement is true when a regional agreement on the Kurds has also been formed following an international agreement or influenced by international requirements. Overall, no independent regional agreement has been formed separate from the requirements of the international system structure in the region thus far, or if such an agreement has been created, its influence on the fall of a Kurdish movement has been or will be minor.

The intra-Kurdish level is very important. When this level takes the shape of a hegemonic or power-centered structure, depending on its independence from the higher levels, if the structural conditions of the international system are in a transient or balancing state, we will observe a significant movement; of course, its power will vary depending on its state. This means that the Kurds can circumvent the national and regional levels easily if international conditions are favorable and if they succeed in resolving their internal differences. Nonetheless, the potential for the formation of Kurdish movements in other states should not be neglected.

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